

Hobbies

Many old coins plunge in value; 'super rarities' stay high

By Roger Boye

Many old coins continue to drop in value despite an ongoing robust market for "super rarities."

In August, certain types of uncirculated coins slid 1.77 percent in value, according to a respected price index compiled by the hobby newspaper Coin World. Since March, the index for so-called "mint state 65" uncirculated coins has fallen 6.34 percent.

"Common-date Morgan [silver] dollars continued to lose value as did common-date Peace dollars, walking Liberty half dollars and gold type coins," wrote trends editor Keith M. Zaner. The index for uncirculated (MS-65) silver dollars minted from 1878 to 1921 dropped nearly 26 percent in five months.

Meanwhile, in the latest

"glamour sale," a set of U. S. gold coins to be auctioned in California next month could bring a winning bid of more than \$2 million. All six of the experimental "pattern coins" are dated 1872.

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A major auction company has changed the way it reports sales results in an attempt to reduce market manipulation by coin sharks.

Heritage Numismatic Auctions of Dallas will no longer publicize the price paid for a coin sold at auction if the buyer is the person who consigned the coin for sale. Heritage also will identify such "buy backs" in lists of its auction results sent to consignors.

Some persons bid up prices on coins they consign to auction, buy them back by submitting the winning bids, and then quietly sell the coins to unsuspecting in-

vestors using the published auction results as "proof" the coins are worth artificially high prices, according to company spokesman Rod Downey.

Auction companies can encourage buy backs by charging a flat fee for such transactions rather than a percentage commission based on the gavel price. For example, a coin's consigner might have to pay only a \$100 fee to buy back his coin that "sold" at auction for \$20,000. In a normal coin-auction sale, the buyer pays a 10 percent commission and the seller receives the gavel price less 10 percent.

Coin World praised the Heritage action as "major step forward and a practice well worth emulating."

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A centurion graces one side of a centennial medallion to be issued by the nation's largest or-

ganization of coin collectors.

The classic Roman officer is depicted as moving into a new era armed only with the powers of knowledge and enlightenment. The 32,000 member American Numismatic Association celebrates its 100th anniversary next year, which will include a mid-August convention in suburban Rosemont expected to attract thousands of hobbyists.

The medal's "tails side" shows a series of rings that could indicate the ripples from a coin dropped in water.

To order a medallion in brass, silver or gold, call the ANA, toll free, at (800) 367-9723. The three-inch brass medal costs \$42, including a holder, presentation box and postage; prices of the silver and gold items will depend on the precious-metal market.

Orders received by Nov. 12 will be delivered by Christmas. Also, the ANA probably will sell a few centennial medallions at the August convention.

The ANA was founded in Chicago and now has headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colo.